

The best guarantee of a good, secure job in today's increasingly competitive world is a quality education. But not everyone has that opportunity. I know what it is like to have a tough time affording college: With the help of Federal Pell grants, I was the first in my family to graduate from college. Today, a college education costs a small fortune, yet it is harder than ever to find help.

Since 2001, tuition has increased by over 30 percent at the average 4-year public school. Over the same period, family incomes have increased less than 6 percent. As the cost of college continues to rise and family incomes stagnate, more and more students are qualifying for Pell grants and other Federal student aid programs. We can't let a college education become a privilege just for the wealthy. We must ensure that families and students can afford college, regardless of their financial resources.

That is why in the Senate, I am fighting to increase the maximum Pell grant to \$5,100—an amount that actually keeps pace with costs. That is also why, on the first day of the 110th session of Congress earlier this month, I introduced legislation to permanently increase the amount that families can save annually for college and take as a tax deduction.

On the same day, in that same spirit, I introduced other legislation to encourage employees to set aside money for their education costs and to encourage employers to provide matching funds through lifelong learning accounts. It is about investing in a more competitive America, a growing economy, and our common future. We are creating a better world for our businesses, our State, and most importantly our workers.

The policies we choose to support reflect our priorities as a nation. When the middle-class gets squeezed from every side, it may be easiest to relent, accept the status quo, or give in to frustration. But we have a responsibility to fight back and to fight for something better. That is what Martin Luther King may have called infinite hope. We can honor King by coming together and making that promise a reality.

TRIBUTE TO CRAIG C. MELLO, PH.D.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, on December 10, in Stockholm, Sweden, the Nobel Prize in Medicine for 2006 was awarded to Dr. Craig C. Mello of the University of Massachusetts Medical School for his revolutionary discovery of the gene-silencing process called RNA interference.

RNAi, as it is called, is a fundamental mechanism for controlling the flow of genetic information. Dr. Mello's discovery is universally considered to be one of the most significant biomedical discoveries of the past decade, and it has opened up extraordinary op-

portunities for the development of new therapies for cancer, heart disease, illnesses, and many other conditions.

Dr. Mello is a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator and the Blais University Chair in Molecular Medicine at UMass Medical School. His research and its international recognition by the Nobel Committee have brought great honor and pride to our city, Commonwealth, and Nation.

Dr. Mello received his B.S. from Brown University in 1982 and his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1990. He served as a postdoctoral fellow at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, WA, and joined the faculty of UMass in 1994.

I join Dr. Mello's many friends and colleagues in congratulating him for his landmark discovery, and I wish him well in the years to come.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM K. PHILLIPS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize William K. Phillips, the longtime Director for the Small Business Administration's New Hampshire district office. Since 1981, Bill has led the agency through economic booms and slumps while demonstrating a sharp commitment to the business community in this state. On March 2 of this year, Bill will be retiring. His leadership will be missed, and I want to offer him my deepest thanks for not only the advice he has given me throughout the years but for everything he has done to make this State a better place to live.

Because of his unique professional resume, there are few people in the region who better understand the critical role small businesses play in a healthy economy and who know what entrepreneurs need to expand and thrive. Bill founded Benchmark Industries, a leader in resistance welding technology. He worked as senior vice-president of the Bank of New Hampshire, was the president of the former Londonderry Bank and Trust, and served on the board of directors of First NH Banks, which is now Citizens Bank of New Hampshire.

For the past two and half decades, Bill has been directing the SBA's operations in New Hampshire. It was in this role he made his name as a champion for small businesses. His dedication was most obvious during the banking and real estate crisis our State experienced during the early 1990s. Fortunately, Bill and his team at the SBA were here to meet this difficult challenge. Using their expertise and resources, the New Hampshire SBA under Bill Phillips relieved much of the anxiety business and homeowners were feeling and helped the State recover. New Hampshire today is a great place to work and start a company, and Bill can certainly feel proud of his role in strengthening our state's excellent reputation.

The definition of a vibrant economy goes beyond just a bunch of numbers

and figures on a graph. What it really means is that people are working, improving the communities in which they live, building wealth, providing a better quality of life for their families and, in some cases, realizing life long dreams. Bill has been successful because he knows this and has always remembered that people, not statistics, are what matter. His experience and insights have served him well in the position of district director but, more importantly, they have benefitted New Hampshire. There are many businesses here, both small and large, which can be described as success stories because Bill took an interest in their future. Thank you, Bill. You have earned a long and healthy retirement.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a withdrawal which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 287. A bill to prohibit the use of funds for an escalation of United States military forces in Iraq above the numbers existing as of January 9, 2007.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-303. A communication from the Chairman and CEO, Farm Credit Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Disclosure and Reporting" (RIN3052-AC11) received on January 11, 2007; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-304. A communication from the Regulatory Analyst, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fees for Rice Inspection Services" (RIN0580-AA92) received on January 11, 2007; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-305. A communication from the Under Secretary of Agriculture (Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services), transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program" (RIN0584-AD35) received on January 11, 2007; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.